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ABSTRACT

The Skyline Career Development Center was conceived as an opportunity for upper secondary students in the Dallas school district to accomplish educational goals beyond the conventional curriculum, especially in the area of career education. A flexible curriculum was developed to offer courses not available elsewhere and to enable students to perform at varying levels, terminating at different points in any of the courses. A new report card was designed to report student progress based on individual achievement, allowing a student to compare his growth with his own past performance. Evaluation of the Center during its first year was limited to collecting information on teacher, student, and parent attitudes about various aspects of the program. Attitudes concerning the new forms for reporting student progress showed that the new system was generally well-received by students and parents but that teachers were still opposed to the process, although not the concept. No final study of student progress was prepared due to several record deficiencies. More than three-fourths of the students indicated positive feelings toward classes, career values, and the Center. However, most of the educational clusters had attrition rates higher than 50 percent of the enrollment. Study findings are detailed in the report, with recommendations for improvements in the Center's programs. (MF)

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1971-72 FINAL REPORT ON

PRODUCT EVALUATION

AT THE

CAREER DEVELOPMENT CENTER

Report No. 72-35

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Approved final report of the Research and Evaluation Branch of the Department of Planning, Research, and Evaluation.

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Dallas, Texas

INTRODUCTION

This evaluation report is a summary of findings reported in several reports throughout the year.

The evaluation of the Dallas Independent School District's Career Development Center was accomplished by a staff of seven - consisting of two professional evaluators, two process evaluators, a computer programmer, data clerk and a secretary. This staff was from the DISD Research and Evaluation Branch.

The Career Development Center is a mammoth facility which was opened in the Fall of 1972. The facilities and equipment are modern and representative of that found in the various careers for which the students are receiving training. (There are 25 clusters representing many different career areas).

The Skyline Career Development Center was conceived as an opportunity for students with appetites for study and learning beyond the conventional curricu'um, especially in the area of career education.

One distinguishing feature of the Center is the provision for extensive preparation in a selected career area without sacrificing college entrance requirements. Another purpose of the Career Development Center program is to provide qualified personnel for employment upon graduation.

Application to the Career Development Center is open to all upper secondary students in the Dallas Independent School District. The only stipulations placed upon an applicant are that he have a definite educational goal and he must have the potential ability to accomplish his goal.

Through an organization of cluster advisory committees the business community was heavily involved in planning, implementing and assessing the program. An advisory committee was formed for each cluster. These committees functioned actively during the planning and implementing of the program.

The Career Development Center is to be a catalyst for positive change. Courses not presently offered and nowhere else available are to comprise the clusters. Curriculum was developed which could have impact throughout the District. The curriculum will be unique to the District. It will be flexible, enabling students to perform at varying levels and terminate at different points in any of the offerings.

The curriculum developed was in a behavioral objective format with activities and resources identified for completion of the behavioral objectives.

In keeping with the individualized concept of the Career Development Center, a new report card was developed to report student progress. This reporting form was based upon individual achievement as measured by successful completion of behavioral objectives. The reporting system did not emphasize peer competition, but rather, allowed a student to compare his growth with his own past performance. Since no child "fails" to progress, he was not reporting as a failure to his parents.

Since the Career Development Center is to be a catalyst for positive change, then teachers were given the freedom and encouragement to explore new relationships, try new ideas, and investigate innovative teaching strategies.

CAREER DEVELOPMENT CENTER CLUSTERS 1971-72

DISD MANAGED	RCA MANAGED
Aesthetics	Aeronautics
Child Care	Architectural Drafting
Cosmetology	Business and Management
Drama	Computer Technology
English	Construction
Graphics	Health Technologies
Languages	Electronics
Man and His Environment	Fashion Design
Mathematics	Horticulture
Music	Interior Design
Plastics	Photography
Science	Television Arts
	Transportation

One of the primary functions of the R & E unit at Skyline was to perform a variety of evaluation activities that were categorized into three major areas. The purpose of this year-end report is to present the activities and findings that took place under the category of product evaluation.

The initial goal of product evaluation was to measure and interpret student attitudes and performance both at the conclusion of the project's first year of operation as well as during the school year. Optimally this approach would measure predetermined objectives of the program based on performance criteria associated with each objective. The results of such measures could then be compared with standards established prior to the beginning of the program. This would allow decision makers to carry out a change process with alternative options available depending on the findings gained through product evaluation. Eventually, this approach would refine the program to the point where it was ready for diffusion.

The Career Development Center was to undergo a similar rigorous examination starting with its first year of operation. However, with the lack of existing criterion-referenced tests appropriate for the clusters, little, if any, hard data could be collected on student performance in this area. During the first year, the R & E unit at Skyline could only expend its available resources for carrying out product evaluation by collecting information on teacher, student, and parent attitudes on a variety of topics relating to what was taking place at the Career Development Center.

This report is designed to present the findings of all product evaluation conducted by the on-site R & E staff. The questions were examined in varying detail depending on the amount of staff and time available. The questions have been broken out by subject matter to provide more meaningful and logical reading. The major findings of each report are briefly outlined in the discussion of each subject. The numbers listed in parentheses refer to the report numbers as listed in the Preliminary Report S72-30.

A copy of each report written during the 1971-72 school year can be found in Volume III of the Skyline reports. Therefore, no references such as footnoting have been made throughout this report. It is suggested that each reader refer to individual reports as desired.

Questions were developed to ascertain the attitudes of students, teachers and parents toward the various aspects of the program. They also involved the determination of student achievement in the clusters. This information was provided to two levels of administration (Mr. Stamps - Deputy Superintendent and Dr. Webster - Director, Research and Evaluation) at various times during the year.

1. What are the attitudes of teachers, students and parents toward the present forms used for reporting student progress?
2. To what extent are students progressing in each cluster, as measured by the number of objectives completed?
3. What are the students' attitude toward class and career?
4. Were the pre-service and in-service training programs for teachers effective?
5. How do students and counselors perceive the counseling function?
6. What was the withdrawal situation at the Career Development Center?

One of the first areas of R & E involvement in product evaluation at Skyline centered on an attitudinal study of the new forms used for reporting student progress. Teachers, students and parents were polled twice during the year - after the first six weeks and at the end of the first semester. Both studies were conducted on a ten percent simple random sample of students and parents, and all instructors. A questionnaire was constructed for each study based on the needs of the decision makers at Skyline and the anticipated responses from all questioned.

The first study (Nos. 71-10, parts 1 and 2) found teachers split with

regard to satisfaction with the initial form. The greatest opposition voiced was concern about the form being too confusing and complicated for students and parents. However, teachers did seem to like the concept. Students were also divided over the question of the difficulty in understanding the reporting form. Student support of the new form did exist to the extent that they liked it better than the traditional report card. Finally, parents were generally supportive of the new reporting form with some reservations. A basic assumption made by many parents was that the system would improve in time.

Several suggestions for change and complaints were made by students, parents and teachers. The major changes and complaints were as follows:

A. Those made by students

1. Provide an explanation of the form.
2. Require written teacher comments.
3. Simplify the form.
4. Grades should be given every six weeks.

B. Those made by parents

1. Simplify the form.
2. Return to using the traditional report card.
3. Establish performance scales.
4. Require written teacher comments.

C. Those made by teachers

1. Limit the amount of paper work.
2. Simplify the form.
3. Too time consuming.
4. Provide an overall grade.
5. Establish performance scales.

Recommendations were made covering all of the above comments except the desire on the part of a group of parents to return to the traditional report card.

One additional concern held by the R & E group at Skyline was obtaining information from minority parents. It was found that barriers of language, student mobility, incomplete or non-existent data information, and ignorance (not stupidity) exist. Therefore, alternative methods of communicating with minority parents should be sought.

The second, and final, study conducted on the student progress reporting form was reported in March of 1972 (Report No. 72-14). This study was made in response to requests by various individuals to reassess teacher, student, and parent impressions of the reporting form. Minor changes had occurred in the reporting form since the first study was conducted. It was assumed that there would be improved receptivity by all concerned based on these minor changes, in conjunction with the first two six-weeks forms allowing students and parents to become better acquainted with the form.

The findings generally showed that the system was being well received by students and parents. However, teachers were still opposed to the process, not the concept. Their concerns centered on the input sheets being too time consuming, the perceived limitations due to the computer, and the possibility that many parents would not understand the form. All the groups did seem to prefer the new concept of reporting over the traditional report card.

Again recommendations were made based on the findings. They were as follows:

1. Expend greater effort in providing two-way communication with teachers.
2. Provide clerical assistance to teachers for paper work.
3. Provide an explanation of the form.
4. Place a copy of the report form in the student's permanent file.
5. Conduct further study into the areas of dissemination and individualization of the form.

In concluding this area of study, it may be said that the reporting form was well received with the exception of teachers who were concerned with the process of implementing the form. Changes still seem needed. In fact during the second semester plans were laid to increase the utility of the form and lessen the amount of paper work, and work is currently in progress in these areas.

At the end of the first semester, it seemed advantageous to take some measure of student achievement. The only aspect of student achievement that the R & E group was able to assess was student progress, as measured by the number of objectives completed within each cluster or class. This information was available through instructor sign-off on objectives or modules. Some clusters did not have available data that could be presented and interpreted graphically. The obtained data was presented, using two types of graphs, in Report No. 72-27. The first graph showed the number of modules/objectives completed by each student, and the second showed the number of students completing each module/objective.

It was found that several clusters had behavioral objectives which no students had started. The reasons given for this ranged from lack of necessary equipment to changes being made in the sequence of the objectives. Other clusters had all students completing the same behavioral objectives together. Finally, there were some clusters where students were completing behavioral objectives at different times. These last two findings seem to point out that some clusters are individualizing instruction while other clusters are still operating under traditional instruction methods.

Because of the variety of ways to interpret the graphs, findings pertaining to individual clusters or unique occurences were left up to the reader to interpret as he or she so desired. Therefore, the only additional comments concerning this area of study deal with the difficulties encountered in obtaining achievement or progress data on groups of students.

Most available information was in the form of individual progress charts not

class profiles. Many instructor's charts were incomplete or not up-to-date. In addition, some instructor's kept no charts at all. Finally, some classes were not using the curriculum, as developed. Because of these factors and the tremendous amount of staff time required to generate such a report, no year end study of student progress was attempted.

Another area of product evaluation that was considered extremely important to everyone involved at the Career Development Center was that of student attitudes toward class, career, and the Career Development Center. Three studies were conducted in this area (Report Nos. 71-12, 72-9, and 72-28).

The first report was an analysis of a pilot study conducted with a random sample of CDC students responding to a questionnaire designed in part by the R & E staff and in part by a group at the University of Michigan. Due to sampling error and the sampling plan, the results were summarized for all students instead of by cluster.

The results showed that more than three-quarters of the students questioned had positive feelings toward class, materials, school work, studying, and homework. More than half indicated their work was easy. Students also identified important reasons for selecting a career. Seventy percent of the students anticipated having further training or education upon completion of their course work at CDC.

Using this first study as a pilot, a large scale study of student attitudes was conducted during January. Again the questionnaire approach was used, but this time almost one-half of the CDC student body was polled. The two areas of interest for this study were the relative importance of various career values as perceived by students and their assessment of the instructional climate within the clusters.

The findings for most clusters showed that "income," "job security," and "opportunity for advancement," were considered most important, while "status and prestige" and "parental influence" were rated as least important. These five values were part of a group of ten from which the paired comparisons were generated. The

possible career values were as follows:

1. Status and Prestige
2. Aptitude for the Job
3. Contribution to Society
4. Working Companions
5. Income
6. Job Security
7. Job Benefits
8. Working Conditions
9. Parental Influence
10. Opportunity for Advancement

The analysis also showed that there was a lack of consensus between clusters as to the importance of some values in selecting a career.

In some clusters "aptitude for the job" and "contribution to society" were rated higher than "income," "job security," and "opportunity for advancement." The notable exceptions were:

A. Clusters rating "contribution to society" as highest

Child and Youth Related Professions

Mathematics

Music

Interior Design

B. Clusters rating "aptitude for the job" as highest

Drama

English

Languages

Man & His Environment

Science

Electronics

Horticulture

Photography

A possible confounding factor in the paired comparison study was that the values listed previously may have been difficult for students to define for themselves and understand. In future studies of this nature terminology must be carefully examined and tested for usefulness with the population under study.

In the area of assessing the instructional climate within the clusters, most students were positive toward the classroom activities taking place. There were some differences between clusters in the areas of changing instructional materials, fairness of evaluation, and distribution of student ability. However, there was a general consensus on the part of students in that they felt they were (a) being prepared for a career, (b) receiving individual help, (c) involved in interesting subjects, and (d) encouraged to think for themselves. The quality of information obtainable from this type of study is as high as possible for a questionnaire approach.

The last study conducted in this area was on student attitudes toward the Career Development Center. It was decided that an interview approach would be used in an effort to get better quality information and a greater rate of response. A sample of 172 students were selected for interviewing by a member of the R & E staff. All but seven students were interviewed. The interview schedule used was field tested and revised under the direction of the on-site process evaluators. The interviews were then coded, punched, and verified prior to any analysis. The study generally showed that students, especially minority students, were extremely positive toward CDC.

The major findings were that students (a) interacted with one another, and other individuals, on subjects relating to what they were doing in the cluster; (b) liked the way their courses were being taught; (c) felt that CDC was different from the regular high school and liked the differences; (d) felt what they were learning was helpful for a variety of reasons; and (e) had made career decisions.

Outside of suggesting that the practices of individualization of instruction

and student involvement in the recruiting process be carried on, the major recommendation dealt with in-house operation endorsing the continued use of interviewing for obtaining information from students.

Based on the information obtained from students who have made career choices, a follow-up interview schedule was constructed and administered to over one hundred students. These students were identified on a previous study as having already made a career choice. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to gain additional information on (a) their future plans (both educational and vocational), (b) how they had made their career choice, and (c) what they knew about their prospective area of specialization in the job market.

It was found that most students selected a particular career area because they had like their experience in the area. Most students had a definite idea concerning the present and future employment picture in their selected career choices. However, the methods by which these ideas are gathered is unknown. It was also found that students would like to find employment in Texas, primarily the Dallas area.

Some recommendations did seem appropriate based upon the information obtained from students. The Career Development Center should:

1. Coordinate efforts to inform students of employment opportunities.
2. Develop a program concerning career awareness.
3. Provide assistance to students in finding employment.

Another task undertaken by the R & E unit at Skyline involved the evaluation of the pre-service and in-service staff development programs for teachers. Two reports were written on this subject (Report Nos. 71-1 and 72-12) during the year. The first report was an analysis of CDC teacher responses to a questionnaire designed to seek out their impressions of the "Confluence of Cultures" sessions and the staff development week at Skyline.

While it was found that most teachers felt that the training sessions offered

would be useful to them, an overwhelming number of the CDC teachers desired having training sessions separate from those given to the regular high school staff. In addition, they also wanted the CDC sessions held within their respective cluster areas. As far as their impressions concerning the "Confluence of Cultures," teachers were split between those who liked the small group sessions and those who felt the program was a "waste of time." Recommendations relative to the information gained were made by the R & E unit.

Because of a lack of definitive activities taking place in the area of staff development for the CDC clusters, no studies were conducted until the second semester when decision makers desired information regarding the Friday staff development periods. The study included for the first time regular high school teachers, in addition to the Career Development Center staff. An extremely poor response rate to a prepared questionnaire made it impossible to make recommendations or even place much importance to the information obtained.

However, it did appear that those who responded could identify four major functions of a coordinator/department head:

1. Provide leadership and act as a liaison with the administration.
2. Supervise and help coordinate staff activities.
3. Act as an advisor for staff members.
4. Organize and plan staff activities.

Teachers also recommended some possible activities for the Friday staff development sessions. Their recommendations included having activities to improve teaching methods, allowing more time for individual teacher preparation, and having meetings in clusters or departments.

In conclusion, it is questionable as to whether or not the pre-service and in-service training sessions were in fact effective. The limited data collected on this subject seems to imply that the sessions were not very effective and that teachers wanted training sessions more relevant to their needs.

A study was also conducted to obtain some insight into the perceived functions of the counselors. The report (72-21) examined counselor and student impressions of the counseling function at the Career Development Center. The first phase of this study involved interviews with the D.I.S.D. counseling staff to identify the tasks they perceived as making up the counseling function. Based on the results of this phase, a list of ten tasks were identified as important to the counseling function. Then four DISD/CDC counselors responded to a questionnaire at the same time, a ten percent sample of students were interviewed by R & E process evaluators. The only task seen as being of low importance dealt with helping students find a job. Students also rated the task of helping students with their personal problems as being of low importance for a guidance counselor.

Most students also said that they had made use of the counseling services and had received the desired assistance. Students generally utilized counseling assistance to make schedule changes. It was obvious to the R & E unit at Skyline that an additional study should be conducted to determine not only importance of the tasks, but also to examine alternative methods of providing important services. Such a study is planned for next year. It was also apparent that part-time students seemed to make only limited use of the counseling office here at Skyline. It was therefore recommended that steps be taken to make these students more aware of the availability of DISD/CDC counselors.

The area of student withdrawal had been identified as crucial to decision makers at the start of the year. Attempts were made by the R & E staff to collect information from withdrawing students when they departed. However, only a handful of students were interviewed so little or no worthwhile information was obtained. The reason for the failure to obtain interviews from withdrawing students was that the R & E staff became aware of withdrawals after the fact. Because of staff limitations nothing could be done to try and locate and interview students once they had left the Career Development Center.

By the end of the first semester it was quite apparent that a fairly large number of students had either never enrolled or withdrew. A special report was prepared based upon data collected from the guidance and attendance offices, as well as available R & E records. The findings were dramatic. It was found that all but a handful of clusters had attrition rates (included were all no shows, not enrolled, and withdrawal students) of over fifty percent of their present enrollment as of January 3, 1972. Another interesting fact was that, on the average, RCA clusters had a larger proportion of students no longer in the cluster. The last finding was based on proportions since RCA clusters totalled more students than DISD clusters and might well be expected to have more students lost.

While no final study was ever conducted to examine second semester withdrawal, it can be said that as of January 3, 1972 there were 1905 students enrolled and by June 1, 1972 there were only 1687 students. Two factors also came to bear on these statistics. First of all, graduation reduced the total enrollment. Secondly, our data became much more accurate over time.

Considering all the information obtained from product evaluation during the first year of operation, several recommendations seem appropriate:

1. THE CAREER DEVELOPMENT CENTER SHOULD BE CONTINUED.

   All the findings seem to indicate that students and parents are positive toward the Career Development Center. Depending upon future demands, existing clusters may have to be expanded or new clusters developed. A needs assessment might have to be performed to provide hard data upon which such decisions could be made.

2. INSTRUCTION SHOULD BE INDIVIDUALIZED WHEREVER AND WHENEVER FEASIBLE.

   Students prefer the unstructured, work-at-your-own-speed atmosphere. The individual assistance students have been getting in their clusters has also been favorably received. Although not all clusters are operating under such conditions, it is hoped that

individualized instruction can be implemented throughout.

3. INSTRUCTORS SHOULD BE BETTER INFORMED ABOUT HOW AND WHEN TO USE THE VARIOUS ADMINISTRATIVE FORMS SUCH AS REQUISITIONS AND ATTENDENCE FORMS.

It was apparent that many instructors, particularly those with no previous teaching experience, found various forms confusing. Time spent during the pre-service session might enlighten instructors as to the need for keeping such forms as well as the most expedient way of utilizing them.

4. STUDENTS SHOULD BE GREATLY ASSISTED IN FINDING A JOB SUITABLE TO THEIR TRAINING.

As students begin to graduate from the Career Development Center a need will arise regarding student placement. Additional assistance should also be given to students in how to keep and be promoted within a job.

5. THE INDIVIDUAL STUDENT PROGRESS REPORTING CONCEPT SHOULD BE CONTINUED.

The only obstacles preventing this type of system from achieving the desired expectations is that efforts are still needed to make the forms easier to understand. Hopefully, this would include something to reduce the turnaround time presently required.

6. AN EXTENSIVE EFFORT SHOULD BE MADE TO PROVIDE A COMPREHENSIVE "CRITERION-REFERENCED" ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT.

Since appropriate "standardized" achievement tests are not available, student achievement should be measured by using the standards written into each behavioral objective.

7. A STUDENT FOLLOW-UP STUDY SHOULD BE CONDUCTED ON ALL STUDENTS LEAVING THE PROGRAM.

A follow-up study of all students leaving the Career Development Center (graduates, withdrawals, etc.) would provide data for program alteration by decision makers. This type of research would provide a post-hoc needs assessment. Based on findings from such a study, changes in the existing program could be made.

8. ALTERNATIVE METHODS OF COMMUNICATING WITH MINORITY PARENTS AND STUDENTS SHOULD BE SOUGHT.

As noted in the body of this report, communication barriers do exist. Presently, there seems to be little, if any, progress toward overcoming these barriers. Visitations might be a way of identifying which barriers do exist. However, the answer to the communication problem is by no means simple. A possible early step might be the establishment of a group of minority parents and school representatives for the purpose of finding solutions to the difficulties that exist.

9. CLASS PROGRESS RECORDS SHOULD BE KEPT.

All instructors keep individual records on students, but only a limited number of instructors kept class progress charts or records. Class progress records would provide needed data on achievement across students and behavioral objectives.